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ABSTRACT

The transcript from a National Public Radio program discusses the school as a training ground for citizenship. Comments by professional and academic persons are interspersed with opinions of White House tourists. A short introductory definition of citizenship provides the framework for the ensuing discussion. After an assessment of citizenship education in the schools by Henry Steele Commager, the transcript illustrates how the schools provide a training ground for citizenship. Students at the John Adams School in Alexandria, Virginia role-play the American Revolution. The growth of "street law" courses which help lay persons learn the practical aspects of law has impacted upon the schools and the curriculum of traditional civics courses. Although requirements for political science in teacher-training programs have become lax, remediation is available through privately-sponsored courses like the Taft Seminar in New York City. Further government funding in local program development is needed to promote an informed citizenry. The school is assumed to be appropriate ground for citizenship training, but the transcript ends with Commager questioning this premise. (AR)

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION

TRANSCRIPT:

Program No. 135: "Learning to be an American"

A co-production of
National Public Radio & the
Institute for Educational Leadership of the
George Washington University

SO-011346

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REINHARDT: In the United States, we allow people to run for public office, even though they may not believe in God.

MERROW: You may know that's true, but half of our thirteen year-olds say false: if you don't believe, you cannot run.

REINHARDT: In the United States, the President may declare a law unconstitutional?

MERROW: Well, that's not true. But nearly forty percent of our seventeen year-olds say, yes, the President may declare a law unconstitutional.

REINHARDT: Those questions, and many more, were asked by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and the results are, well, depressing.

MERROW: What's worse is the inescapable fact that today's kids know less about the government than their counterparts did in 1970.

REINHARDT: Lots of people are pointing to those test results and to other studies done earlier and concluding that our kids are going to grow up to be bad citizens.

MERROW: And therefore that the country itself is in trouble, maybe even in danger, because they won't vote, won't participate, won't care.

REINHARDT: But before we rush to judgment about these bad citizens, let's see if we can agree on what makes a good citizen.

MERROW: Is it knowing who your senators are, or how Supreme Court justices are chosen?

REINHARDT: Or is it simply paying your taxes or voting, or giving your seat to someone on the bus?

WHITE HOUSE TOURISTS DEFINE CITIZENSHIP

MAN: A good citizen is one that works, in my opinion.

WOMAN: One that loves the Lord.

MAN: One who obeys the law and loves his country.

WOMAN: Someone who cares about other people and is conscientious.

MAN: A good citizen should take an active part in probably local government first, and then work up to the state and national level after that.

MAN: What do I think a good citizen is? I guess somebody that pays his taxes, doesn't complain. [Laughter.] I'm paying too much. She complains that's what I'm going to see Jimmy for.

MERROW: We talked to those citizens about citizenship while they were standing in line waiting to tour the White House.

REINHARDT: We didn't ask them, but I'll bet most of them know that the U. S. Constitution does not guarantee every American a good job. Unfortunately, fourteen percent of our 13-year olds think it does.

MERROW: They're in for a shock.

REINHARDT: Speaking of shocks, we've forgotten one of the basic rules of

good citizenship, at least as it's taught in some schools. We haven't introduced ourselves. Well, I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

REINHARDT: We're seriously interested in that question of citizenship education and in how much or how little our kids know about their rights and responsibilities.

MERROW: It used to be called civic education. Today it may be called law related education, street law, or maybe the old familiar name, social studies.

REINHARDT: But more important than the name of the class, what are the kids learning there? Test results say not much. And historian Henry Steele Commager agrees. Reporter Tom Looker asked Commager what kind of citizens our schools are producing these days.

HISTORIAN ASSESSES CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS

COMMAGER: I'm not sure we're really turning out citizens in the traditional sense of the word, the Periclean sense of the word, or the Jeffersonian sense of the word, or the Burkean sense of the word. And we're turning out -- "turning out," what does it mean? Our children learn more from television than they do from school. They see what standards of citizenship are when they watch the soap operas, when they watch the violent stories and the crime stories. What really counts is what they see on television or read in the magazines or the newspapers, if they read them at all, not what they learn from a textbook on civics somewhere. The textbooks on civics do not even expose them to the tradition of greatness. There are traditions of greatness in every history, in every nation. We have greatness in our own nation, in the great speeches, the great episodes, and our students aren't made familiar with those. I think they would learn more from the old-fashioned, rather corny McGuffey kind of reader story, the stories of men of virtue, not to say, "Look, you must try to be like Washington," but to be exposed to the great speeches and great essays and great poetry. We're not exposed to the great things; we're exposed to trivia. And we're exposed to trivia because textbook writers and those responsible for the apparatus of teaching in the secondary schools want adoptions. And to get adoptions you mustn't offend anybody. And if you don't offend anybody, you can't expose them to the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution or great speeches by Churchill or Franklin Roosevelt. Franklin Roosevelt, after all, as we all know, was a communist or a socialist, or something of that kind, so you don't speak well of Mr. Roosevelt in some communities. Modern conservatives wouldn't. Not so long ago, one of the books I helped, a textbook I was part-author of, was rejected in Iowa because it spoke too well of the New Deal and also paid too much attention to immigrants and Negroes. So it was thrown out.

Once you get that atmosphere, you can't get textbooks that are anything but evasive, that are not anything but compromises, that avoid all real issues or brush over them with a kind of patina of softness and futility.

REINHARDT: Henry Steele Commager of Amherst College. He was interviewed for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION by Tom Looker.

MERROW: We'll hear from Commager again later in the program.

REINHARDT: Commager criticizes textbooks. But there are many other explanations of why our kids know so little about the country and its government.

MERROW: Here's a laundry list of reasons. You can take your pick.

REINHARDT: Schools offer too many electives, so kids miss out on the basic

knowledge.

MERROW: Social studies textbooks are dreary. A national study came to that conclusion.

REINHARDT: Lousy teacher training. Most social studies' teachers took courses in how to teach social studies, but they didn't take many, or any, courses in government or social studies itself. In other words, lots of methods, but no content.

MERROW: There are other explanations. Some say that the American people have become uncertain of their own values after Vietnam, Watergate and all the attention to racial problems and poverty. We adults are no longer sure of what we stand for, and our kids simply reflect that uncertainty.

REINHARDT: There are a lot of projects and programs in and out of school that are trying to change things.

MERROW: And there're a lot of teacher re-training programs and dozens and dozens of new textbooks stressing new approaches to teaching.

STUDENTS RE-ENACT AMERICA'S PAST

STUDENT: Hell, who are you to say this? What do you do?

STUDENT: We fight the war.

STUDENT: I know, but what....

STUDENT: We want this land, and we want that land. And you expect us to go out....

STUDENT: What are you doing as colonists? I mean, I could just have your head cut off.

STUDENT: Yeah, but I'm over here, and you're over there.

STUDENT: Well, I could send a group of soldiers to come over there.

STUDENT: Well, I can fight your soldiers.

STUDENT: Yeah, and I know the land a lot better than your dumb soldiers.

STUDENT: But what standpoint do you have to say that you shouldn't pay these taxes?

STUDENT: A lot of people. You have the Indians. You don't have the Indians. All you have is these men in these red coats....

STUDENT: We have all of the colonies? So what? So what?

STUDENT: But who are you?

STUDENT: We don't have to look up to anybody. We're all Americans.

STUDENT: Yeah, we're Americans.

STUDENT: We're equal. We're Americans.

STUDENT: We don't have someone who's in charge who we have to have orders from.

REINHARDT: Those kids, 7th graders at the John Adams School in Alexandria, Virginia are role-playing. Some are colonists. One is the King of

England. They're getting a chance to feel what things might really have been like a couple hundred years ago.

MERROW: And they're getting used to speaking up and speaking out.

REINHARDT: That's the theory, any way.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION BY DEBATING TECHNIQUE

MERROW: And it's also the theory behind a more formal approach -- debate.

DUNN: Mr. Pedigree, you'll be making the debate for this side. Do we have a volunteer from this side? You were the only that had your eyes on me.

PEDIGREE: I don't like the debate, but I will.

DUNN: All right. That's one of the advantages of debate that you learn to argue the other side, and therefore you know more about your own side by virtue of learning about the deficiencies of your side and kind of shore up those deficiencies. Any questions?

REINHARDT: Reporter Bob Austin talked with Clemson University Professor Charles W. Dunn, who thinks debate is the best method for teaching citizenship.

DUNN: You find that American government courses tend to be dry nuts and bolts' courses where you're teaching that there're three branches of the government; there's the federal system of government, with the division of powers between the national government and the state governments. But the students tire of that, and there's a need for them to know that. But the debate approach says, look, we can teach all of those nuts and bolts' things in the context of a debate and make it exciting, and the students really want to come to class and participate.

PEDIGREE: We can get involved. In, say, Russia, it's a principally federalistic government. People have no choice, but they still consider themselves a federal government. They have voting rights' equality. But do they really have equality like we do? Can they express their opinion like we do? No, they can't.

The reason we do have a federal government is to unify our fifty states. Without our fifty states, we would possibly be....

DUNN: I find that they're much more interested and excited about government. They're willing to engage in additional projects. I've had them, in some semesters, write briefs or cases, an affirmative case or a negative case, on a proposition. Sometimes I've had them write several in a semester, and they get very excited about this, because they're just not writing a dry term paper, but they're arguing a case as though they might be arguing the case before a court. It's much more exciting.

REINHARDT: Charles W. Dunn, a professor of government at Clemson University, speaking with Bob Austin of Station WEPR in Clemson, South Carolina.

* * *

REINHARDT: What do you think a good citizen is?

TOURIST: Well, it's a person who obeys all the laws, keeps his family together, things like that.

TOURIST: An educated American.

TOURIST: Oh, I think a good citizen is one who pays his taxes, votes his convictions.

TOURIST: A good citizen? Well, somebody who respects law and order when that's reasonable, behave themselves in relation to their fellow citizens. I would also say who respects and fears God.

TOURIST: Well, it's one who obeys the laws and who votes, writes to the congressman, senator and tells them what they think.

TOURIST: Honest, stra[illegible]orward. A good citizen.

TOURIST: Well, basically one who gives a lot of thought and tends to support the programs and yet maintains his independence and his own attitude. That we can't afford to give up....

STREET LAW AND CITIZENSHIP TRAINING

MERROW: One definition of a good citizen might be someone who understands American law.

REINHARDT: Law related education is a fairly recent phenomenon in some schools.

MERROW: The goal is to produce good citizens by helping them to understand how the legal system works.

NEWMAN: Street law is a program whereby lay persons learn the practical aspects of law, so that they understand the law; they have a better attitude towards the law; that they are able to operate on a daily basis. Law affects everybody's lives continually, and people don't think about it or realize it does.

MERROW: Jason Newman is the Director of the National Street Law Institute, part of Georgetown University in Washington, D. C. He says there's been a legal revolution, and now everyone needs to know how the law works.

REINHARDT: Which prompted me to ask him if street law courses, besides teaching kids the law, aren't also training them to hire more lawyers.

NEWMAN: First, that sounds like "hang all the lawyers" from the Shakespeare. What we're trying to do is not increase the attitudes of our lawyers, but the legal process and the democratic process and now it really is there for their benefit, as well as the fact that if there are restraints on adults or youth, it's there to benefit society, and, in the long run, it benefits them.

REINHARDT: By saying that kids really should be given the opportunity in high school or in elementary school to take street law, to learn a little bit more about law, are you saying that they don't need to learn the things that they used to learn in civics classes, like how many senators, who they are, how they're elected, this kind of thing?

NEWMAN: The problem in the past has been that what has been taught has been civics. And you learn there's a mayor, there's a city council, there's a state, there's a Constitution, there is a President. But that really doesn't help you when you go in and you want to buy a TV set, or when you want to rent an apartment and you're asked to sign a lease, and you don't really understand the provisions of the lease, or you go to buy a car and you're not certain exactly what is being meant in certain provisions of the contract if there's something wrong, a limited warranty. And it's really having people understand that.

REINHARDT: Well, let's take that kid who's now learning these kinds of

things, about what his rights are and what he can do about them. But you're teaching him these things in the public schools. Won't you be teaching him to stand up for rights that will get him in trouble with his teachers? Won't there just be anarchy, or something like that?

NEWMAN: No, we haven't found that to be the case. We are in several high schools across the country. And if it is taught in a responsible manner, you're not faced with the teaching from in a school that is saying "Kids, you have rights," and then the school is very upset. Before a student exercises a right, he or she ought to realize that it ought to be very important to them and not be a whimsical right, and that was their determination as to what was whimsical and what was not, because you could have a lengthy court case; there could be a lot of attorney fees; and that even though you may have assumed your right, you may be found wrong; or even if you were right, it may have to go through several courts before, in fact, you are determined that you are right. So that simply because you have a right, you don't say "I have this right, and this is what I am going to do." So we try to balance the reality from what's on paper your right is.

MERROW: Jason Newman, Director of the National Street Law Institute in Washington, D. C.

REINHARDT: I went to one school that has a street law program, the Calvin Coolidge High School in Washington, D. C. Doris Schuman teaches social studies at Coolidge and works with the Georgetown law students who teach street law.

LAW STUDENT: Right. So, in effect, everybody in this class thought about the case. Now what we're going to do right now is to distinguish what are the facts of the case and what are implied facts. What I mean, implied facts....

SCHUMAN: It's very easy in this case to involve the students right away. They start with criminal law, and that's very glamorous. They see Perry Mason, and they see Kojak, and they see the other law type shows on television. So it means a little bit more to them.

REINHARDT: You haven't seen, for instance, students after having the course for a while get all excited about wanting to print some obscenities in the school newspaper or change rules in the school, or be anarchistic?

SCHUMAN: Not in my experience, not since I've been teaching the course. I don't know what would have happened ten years ago, but, no, not in my experience.

REINHARDT: Are you really in this course teaching good citizenship?

SCHUMAN: Well, I think probably that this is a secondary goal of any course. If a person achieves his goals in high school, which would be to be able to take care of himself and possibly contribute, if he chose to do so, but certainly to be able to at least take care of himself, I guess that's the best we can do. We don't specifically talk about pledging the flag, and this kind of thing. But the more aware the student is of the system, the governmental system, the legal system, the more responsible and possibly responsive the student can be. And I think that's probably what we would want in terms of good citizens.

REINHARDT: You're taking the street law course. Why did you decide to take it?

STUDENT: Well, when I was in the tenth, I took basic applied law. So, you know, I wanted to complete my law, you know, learning. And if I had the money, I would take law in school. But that's very unlikely. But I'm interested in law and I like it.

REINHARDT: Why?

STUDENT: It involves your civil rights and contracts, you know; the things you should know to get ahead anywhere.

STUDENT: After high school I would like to go on to law school, you know. And I'm new in D. C., and I would like, you know, to know a whole lot about the law around D. C.

MERROW: Students in the street law course at Coolidge High School in Washington, D. C.

NEW METHODS FOR TEACHING LAW

REINHARDT: Street law is one of about four hundred programs in the schools today designed to teach students how American government works. A little over ten years ago, there were only twenty-five programs.

QUIGLEY: Well, it's interesting, you know, that the first unit that we developed at UCLA in about 1965, 1966 was a unit on due process of law, essentially fair procedures for dealing with conflicts, managing conflicts. We tried it at the University Elementary School, and we asked students after they'd had four weeks of very intensive and sort of rigorous training in this field to rank the subject along with about twelve or fourteen other subjects that they were being taught. And it got second place, second to PE. But the traditional social studies took about 9th or 10th place.

REINHARDT: Charles Quigley is Executive Director of Law in a Free Society, a program of the California Bar Association. Reporter Jim Flaconer asked Quigley whether the new teaching methods these programs use, methods like role playing and mock trials, actually work in the classroom.

QUIGLEY: They work, but they place a very heavy burden on the teacher. Often, for example, an inquiry or Socratic method is much more difficult than asking the students to open up the textbook and read the chapter and answer the questions at the end. To develop in the classroom the sort of environment where the kids feel free to participate, express their own ideas and bat ideas around places a heavy, relatively heavy burden on the teacher. For a teacher, rather than run through a normal skill building activity, as one would in arithmetic or language, or something like that, to allow the kids to get up out of their seats and change all the furniture in the classroom and set it up for a simulated legislative debate or a moot court, or something like that, is something the teachers never did when they were kids; they didn't do in their training, and something that is a change that makes a lot of them uneasy. So there's a lot of work to be done to provide teachers the background, the assistance which will, you know, enable them or lead them to use those sorts of teaching methods and activities in their classrooms.

REINHARDT: Charles Quigley of the Law in a Free Society program, sponsored by the California Bar Association. He was interviewed for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION by Jim Falconer, Station KCFR, Denver, Colorado.

* * *

TEACHER TRAINING IN CIVICS

REINHARDT: American newspapers are allowed to publish criticism of public officials, like a senator or a governor or the President? True, right?

MERROW: Not according to 46% of our thirteen year-olds, who think it's not okay to publish criticism of public officials. I wonder how many teachers know it's okay. Well, surely most of them do. But apparently twenty percent of those teaching social studies have never taken a government or political science course.

REINHARDT: One of the number of programs to re-train teachers is run by

the Robert Taft Institute in Government. Its goal is to teach teachers how important the two party system is.

MERROW: Marilyn Chelstrom directs the entire network of Taft seminars from New York City. When Chelstrom visited the seminar at Clemson University, she spoke with reporter Bob Austin.

CHELSTROM: From our evaluation of teachers who attempt the Taft programs, we still find that twenty percent of the teachers who come to the Taft programs have never had a political science course. The next twenty percent of, say, a thousand teachers, two hundred have never had a political science course. The next two hundred have had, at the most, two courses in political science. Almost none of them have ever participated actively in a political party. These statistics have not changed over the years that we have been conducting the Taft seminars. So I think the fault goes back for that lack of preparation to the schools of education, who do not require, for the most part, courses in political science in their preparation of teachers.

AUSTIN: Do you also fault the school systems at all, or what's the problem here?

CHELSTROM: I do think school systems, too, are somewhat to blame in the directives that they give to teachers. I have found in a limited study in working with this program for fifteen years -- of course, I have not been in contact with a great number of school districts. But there are very few approved courses on practical politics, on political parties. And many of the teachers who have participated in the Taft programs have gone back to their school districts and systems and have been instrumental in developing such courses which have been approved for the particular high school or particular school system. I think this is encouraging.

Beyond this, I think there are many school administrators that might discourage talking about political parties or practical politics in the classroom. Therefore, a teacher with little background is not going to touch on these subjects, knowing that the principal or the superintendent maybe would prefer that the teacher stick to the structure of government.

MERROW: Marilyn Chelstrom, Executive Director of the Robert Taft Seminars in Government.

A FEDERAL ROLE IN CITIZENSHIP TRAINING

REINHARDT: Teachers need training or re-training, but it will take years and years at the present rate. Maybe the federal government should help out.

MERROW: What role should Washington play in the citizenship education of our kids?

REINHARDT: That's a timely question, for two reasons. The Senate has passed legislation creating a law related education program.

MERROW: The House of Representatives did not pass that law, so they have to argue it out in conference.

REINHARDT: Also, a government task force in the U. S. Office of Education is now recommending that the Commissioner of Education use his discretionary power to create a law related program immediately.

MERROW: I asked the current Commissioner, Ernest Boyer, what the federal role in citizenship training ought to be.

BOYER: First, the federal government does not have, and should not have, control over the curriculum. That's a decision left to the local districts and the state. The most we would do in this area would be to have grant

money available to districts or states that would like to experiment with new kinds of curriculum or extend what they're already doing.

MERROW: But doesn't that get you into curriculum, if you have the right to approve who gets the grant money and who doesn't?

BOYER: Only to this extent. It would be absolutely wrong for us to say that it is now federal policy that all sixteen thousand school districts teach "X" or "Y." On the other hand, if Congress passes a law that indicates support for law related education, they give us five million dollars. We announce to districts "This money is available to help you develop curriculum in this area." Now if no one applies, we have five million dollars that goes begging. It's wholly voluntary. It represents the priorities that districts have established, and the money is there then to allow them to move ahead on their terms.

Now it is true, if a law is passed that identifies an area, such as law related education and if five million dollars is there, that may act as a pump primer. And districts that might not have thought that was important suddenly think it's important. So money does have its own tantilizing influence. I grant you that. But I do wish to come back full-circle and say that I do not believe that the federal government should, as important as I might think it is, to say to all districts "You teach citizenship education in the schools." I might say that in a speech as a personal judgment, but not as public policy.

REINHARDT: Ernest Boyer, U. S. Commissioner of Education. He says no to a federal role. But ironically, Tom Clark of the Constitutional Rights Foundation, would like to see the feds involved. At least he'd like the federal money.

CLARK: We and a number of other groups in the field of civic and law related education have tried now for a number of years to stimulate the federal government and many of the states to do more programmatically than they've done in this particular area. And there're beginning to be signs that our efforts, coupled with, I'm sure, what policy-makers see happening in this country with regard to citizen participation in public affairs, are really leading in the direction now of specific federal statutes, not to tell people how to teach citizenship, but rather to support a variety of approaches to citizenship education. And we welcome that. We think that's a significant improvement. And while it will no doubt begin as a very small effort, we hope it's the beginning of a much more significant kind of effort on the part of the government.

You know, this is a period of time when everybody is talking about competency. Most of the states are moving in the direction of some sort of school leaving competency based performance measurement system. A number of the states are including citizenship skills among the competencies. My feeling is that citizenship skills are basic skills, that social studies skills are as basic to making decisions in a very complex and threatening world as the knowledge of simple mathematical procedures, and that the success or failure of this kind of a democratic society has always been thought, at least, to be based on having an informed citizenry.

REINHARDT: Tom Clark of the Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles. He was interviewed for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION by Jim Falconer, Station KCFR, Denver, Colorado.

* * *

MERROW: Libraries are allowed to have books that criticize democracy. No argument about that, right?

REINHARDT: Well, nearly one-fifth of our seventeen year-olds say, no,

libraries may not have books that criticize democracy.

• • •

POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

MERROW: You'd think that learning about citizenship and politics would come easily in cities with conspicuous, vocal city governments.

REINHARDT: Chicago comes to mind. So we sent reporter Scott Simon to a city college that's teaching Chicagoans about citizenship in their own backyards.

MERROW: Scott Simon, by the way, was once chosen Chicago Junior Citizen of the Month back when he was in junior high school.

SIMON: The University of Illinois at Chicago is an enormous and futuristic looking campus situated just west of the city's Loop. And the story of how it began to be built fifteen years ago in the place that it now occupies is often considered a casebook example of urban political machinery at work, with boisterous community meetings, vociferous ethnic groups, pickets, aldermen and rumors of illicit land dealings. It seems a well-placed sort of site for an unusual sort of course.

RAKOVE: Daley changed the machine and made it much more efficient and effective than it had ever been before and actually, I think, laid the groundwork for the way in which the machine has continued after his death.

SIMON: That's Professor Milton Rakove, author of a book entitled Don't Make No Waves; Don't Back No Losers, an admiring depiction of Chicago's political machine. His co-professor of this course is Dick Simpson, who might be better known in this city as one of only several anti-machine city councilmen. Together they teach a political science course that's often set on the literal doorsteps of their students. It's somewhat as if Jackson Pollack and Norman Rockwell had joined together to instruct an art class in light and dark composition.

RAKOVE: It was actually Dick's idea to put this thing together. Since Dick is the leading reform alderman on the City Council as well as a political science professor here and I'm probably the leading pro-machine spokesman on campus, Dick thought it would be a good idea to put this course together in a kind of debate-dialogue format about what the city's like and where the city's going to go, what its problems are and how they can best be dealt with.

SIMPSON: The problem goes back to what used to be called civics in high school....

SIMON: Dick Simpson.

SIMPSON: ...which is a sort of notion that if a student just knows the basic structure and can read a newspaper and can cast a vote in an election, that some great good has been achieved for society. That's clearly untrue. It really doesn't matter whether they vote in an election unless they know what they're doing. And more imporant than voting in an election is to get a hundred other people to vote for their candidate or to organize an election campaign, to begin with, or, if they refuse to participate in electoral politics because they don't agree with that, that they organize some other method of political action. My interest is that we train political leaders, not that we train sort of puppets that are usually called citizens. Citizens used to be active people who had a role in the government. And I'm interested in that notion of citizenship and not in whether they know whether there're two houses of Congress or how many Supreme Court justices there are.

SIMON: Whatever the charm of the idea that joined the professors

together, the course they've designed has it critics. Some contend that for a political science course, it might contain a bit too much Richard Daley and not quite enough John Locke. And there're others to argue again that the likes of Mr. Daley simply have no business being mentioned in the same space as, say, the Federalist Papers.

Milton Rakove finds that many of their students have a problem that's directly counter, though, to those of many other students who find their classroom knowledge is untempered by actual experience.

RAKOVE: Our students, on the whole, from the city particularly, are fairly street-wise kids who are familiar, to some extent, with the realities of politics in a city like Chicago and the processes of politics. They're really sadly lacking in a basic conceptual framework, and they're very short on theory, that kind of thing. So you have to kind of introduce them to some intellectual concepts.

SIMON: The course makes frequent use of guest speakers, mostly local ward powers, who might ordinarily be less recognizable than more celebrated officeholders, but those people that probably maintain the political machinery. And often, according to Professors Simpson and Rakove, they're simply more candid than congressmen or cabinet officials in discussing political power. And they add that it would be unwise to think that a course, such as the one they teach, tied as it is so closely to an examination of the single, unofficial political institution, will necessarily limit a student's political imagination.

RAKOVE: We don't want them to know how to fix a traffic ticket. I don't want to teach anybody how to do anything like that at all. No, what we want them to know, basically, are two things, I think. One is, how does the process of politics and government work in Chicago in terms of dealing with the problems, the major problems the city faces. And secondly, to go to the next level that I think Dick is more concerned with generally than I am, what are the alternatives to this, and how else can you do it other than the way that it's being done here?

SIMPSON: Chicago politics is a particular form of American politics at large. And so it's not parochial in the sense that we want them to become precinct captains in Chicago or to be anti-precinct captains in Chicago, or to be ward committeemen. We both think that the Chicago holds a key to all of American politics, and that if you understand this city, you understand American politics. If we bring up a whole generation of people who have no interest in politics and no tools and can't understand it, they'll obviously make a mess of it.

SIMON: This is Scott Simon in Chicago.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOLS IN TEACHING CITIZENSHIP

REINHARDT: The U. S. Supreme Court is a part of the judicial branch of government? Well, you know it is, of course.

MERROW: But thirty-five percent of our seventeen year-olds don't know that.

REINHARDT: The depressing statistics continue. Our kids don't know enough about our government, it seems. But there's a question we haven't asked. Is it the schools' fault? Is it their job to teach citizenship?

MERROW: I told Education Commissioner Ernest Boyer that I doubted whether schools, tame and timid places that they often are, could really teach how the country works.

BOYER: I think that a citizenship education program clearly carries

with it the responsibility not only to make clear a student's obligation to make our institutions work, but also a clear explanation that there's a process by which change can be brought about. Both of these are the essentials of citizenship in a democracy. Now, obviously, any society worries about a change that is extreme and abrupt and stirs up trouble. But again, if our democracy is what we say it is, there are available procedures that can bring about change short of revolution. And that's exactly why we need to have citizenship courses, so that students understand that in our society those mechanisms are there.

The societies that are in deep trouble today, that in fact breed revolution, are the ones that are seen by the citizens as expecting conformity and not providing procedures for remedy. Those are the ones that lead to confrontation. But we believe in this country that change is possible, that you can, in fact, through mechanisms short of revolution, bring about changes if enough people want them.

MERROW: Let me be a devil's advocate here, and let's have you be that teacher saying those things. And then kid says, well, Mr. Boyer, how about a specific example? You say change is possible. Suppose we want to elect a new mayor instead of this guy, this lunkhead we have in office here. And you encourage a class discussion about the competence of Mayor Rhodes over there. What do you think is going to happen to you, as a teacher, when word gets out that you and your high school political science class are talking about ways in which a mayor can be replaced and using a specific example of the mayor of the town?

BOYER: Well, I think that's absolutely important for students who will be citizens of the next generation to know how not only mayors are elected, but how they might not be elected in the future.

MERROW: But aren't you, as a teacher, going to be in real trouble in your community for having brought up Mayor Rhodes, and so on and so forth?

BOYER: No. I don't where Mayor Rhodes is right now. But to pretend that it may bring controversy if you deal too specifically with a given situation: to pretend that would not happen would be naive.

MERROW: But isn't there a lot of pressure, then, to keep it artificial, to keep it fake, and therefore kids don't learn anything because it's artificial and fake, but the teacher keeps his job?

BOYER: All right. You're mentioning the clear fact that schools are under pressure not to deal with controversy too close to home. That's true. And I understand that. I do believe, however, that in almost all instances a teacher can carry on fairly and objectively a discussion not about personalities, but about a given issue. I think it would be a mistake to talk about Mayor Rhodes, as you've said, as a personality. It would not be a mistake to talk about a conflict over a sewage bond issue, or a conflict in the community over some redevelopment that has in it environmental questions, to say "What are we talking about, what are the pros and cons?"

I think in that instance, if it's a genuine issue in a community, a classroom can be led in an objective way. Now if the teacher gets up on a soapbox and, as teacher, begins to say that it's clear we have to "X" or "Y," I think that's using the classroom in the wrong way.

MERROW: I'm tempted to bring up the Vietnam war and teachers who wanted to talk about that and the problems they ran into. I remember it because I was teaching at that time.

BOYER: Well, there are extremes in a society when tensions run so -- when feelings run so deep. And of course, during wartime, when lives are involved and families are being torn, the raw nerves are so exposed that what

might be possible under more tranquil conditions becomes tougher. I remember my own high school experience during World War II, just coming into the draft when it ended. But I remember the enormous emotionalism that surrounded that. Of course there, there wasn't the conflict about the war. But there are moments in a nation's history, or in a community's history -- it doesn't have to be national -- when the tensions are so deep that anyone who is too aggressive in challenging what might be judged as the conventional wisdom on the point runs a risk. And that can happen either in or outside the classroom. It's not limited to the classroom.

But it's absolutely true that during Vietnam, at least for a period, even to talk about that objectively was seen by some to be unpatriotic or to be insensitive to the sacrifices of others. All I'm saying is that the institution does sometimes face enormous tests. And there are, I guess, even in a democracy, limits. But by and large, I think we've survived this rather well. There have been moments of madness in our history when irrationality seems to -- I mean, during the McCarthy period for a time, we seemed to have lost our bearings as to our capacity to deal freely with issues without getting personalities battered. But those have, I think in our culture, been really rather the exception. And as I go around the country and the world, I think that we have maintained the openness of our institutions better than almost any society that I've seen. And I think there's no sign now that that openness is being diminished. I think we're really quite generous in allowing the schools to deal with the issues of social controversy and complexity.

REINHARDT: U. S. Commissioner of Education, Ernest Boyer.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION OUTSIDE THE SCHOOLS

MERROW: There are a lot of institutions and places outside the school that work very hard at teaching citizenship or a combination or citizenship and good behavior.

REINHARDT: The Boy Scouts. The Girl Scouts. The American Legion. The League of Women Voters. The Chamber of Commerce. The Junior Chamber of Commerce. The 4-H Club. The Daughters of the American Revolution. They're all involved in citizenship education.

MERROW: For example, the American Legion has an oratory contest. Last year there were thirty thousand entrants from high school, all speaking on the Constitution and the the citizen's relationship with the government.

REINHARDT: The Chamber of Commerce has a program to teach economics and the free enterprise system. It distributes film strips to the schools.

MERROW: The 4-H Club sends twelve thousand young people to Washington, D. C. every year for a week, so they can, as they say, see government in action.

REINHARDT: The Daughters of the American Revolution has its Junior American Citizens Program, which tries to encourage patriotism and loyalty to our country.

MERROW: They also teach behavior. Junior American Citizens are taught to serve correctly at parties, open doors for older people, write thank-you notes, behave politely in public places, and give up their seats on streetcars.

REINHARDT: Streetcars?

MERROW: That's what it says. In fact, here's the creed, as read by Mrs. James Bowler of the Junior American Citizens.

BOWLER: believe that through the coming years our United States of America will be a great and happy nation if the boys and girls become active citizens. I'll strive to make my body strong and well and keep it free from

accidents. I will learn to read and write and speak so well that I may understand the thoughts of other people and give to them my own. I'll seek the life work best for me and learn to do it honestly and well. I'll find joy in wholesome recreation when my tasks are done. A family needs love and understanding. I'll do my part in my home. When I'm faced with right and wrong, I'll try to ma e right choices and strengthen my own character. My country needs good citizens. When my time comes I'll study carefully her problems. I'll do my share in choosing leaders wisely. Upon her citizens, our America depends. Today and every day I'll strive to be a good Junior American Citizen.

MERROW: When you say "citizen" then, you mean, and Junior American Citizens mean something more than somebody who grows up and becomes a Republican or a Democrat and votes every year.

BOWLER: They have to be aware of everything around them and know what the country is built on. I think they should know the Constitution. We, of course, stress that. There's an interesting little story about our children at the Greek Orthodox School. They went to the Archives to see the Constitution when it was on display. And the guide spoke to them, talked down to them a little bit, really, and said "Do you know what the Preamble is?" And they, in chorus, repeated the whole Preamble for her. And she said that had never happened before, particularly with 5th and 6th graders.

MERROW: Most kids don't know that. A lot of kids don't know what's in the Constitution at all. But does it impress you that kids have memorized the Preamble? That doesn't really prove anything.

BOWLER: It proves that they know what the Constitution is. And in my day, we all had to memorize the Preamble. I don't know whether you had to or not. But we did. But it really makes the know what the Constitution is. You can have them memorize the Constitution, but at least they know it's there and why it was written.

MERROW: There's another aspect of Junior American Citizens that, in a way, goes beyond knowing the Constitution and goes beyond finding out about your country's problems. And these are some of the things that Junior American Citizens are supposed to do: serve graciously and correctly at parties; behave politely in public places; be quiet, give up your seat in a streetcar, open doors for others older than yourself; that really there's a kind of, almost a stereotype of middle class behavior. Is that something that Junior American Citizens care that much about?

BOWLER: If you're going to talk about classes, I think that lower class and higher class people also want their children to have manners, to learn how to behave properly in public. It's something that I think everyone wants for their children.

REINHARDT: Mrs. James Bowler of the Junior American Citizen program of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Why did you want to take part in this contest? What attracted you to it?

ENTRANT: Well, first of all, our teacher kind of influenced us, and she made it sound like a lot of fun. And I like writing poems and music. So I just decided it would be fun.

REINHARDT: We won't be able to hear the music, but why don't you read it to me? This is what you've written.

ENTRANT: It's called "American Song," and it's about the way the American people sing.

"Some sailors pulling ropes and chains trying to keep their

rhythm, singing a song that keeps the beat while dreaming of their sweethearts.

"A slave out in the cotton field picking cotton the whole day through. Singing about the cotton seems like the only thing to do.

"The cowboy out on the range after a long day's work; he sings a little song so he doesn't go beserk.

"A little girl can't get to sleep. Her mother comes in and sings a song, telling of a handsome prince, and the little girl sings along.

"When you're happy or when you're worried, when you're lonely, when you're sick and you don't know what to do, I suggest you sing a song, but it's really up to you.

"You can sing a song about the glory of America; you can sing a song about King Kong. You can sing a song about working on the railroad, or you can sing a song about a mile long. Americans sing what comes to their heads, and they may sing a song till the day they're dead."

REINHARDT: What made you think of writing about the way Americans sing?

ENTRANT: Well, I like singing. I mean, I know a lot about the history of singing. And I think that, in America, it really is American to sing.

UNORTHODOX LESSONS IN CITIZENSHIP

REINHARDT: Let's go back to school, just for a minute, for another dose of citizenship education. Remember those films about the American Revolution, John Hancock, King George, the pioneers?

NARRATOR: The American pioneer was all this and more. In turn, he served as blacksmith, tanner, physician and, when need required, undertaker. Nor was the woman's work much varied. She was expected to bear and raise a large family. She spun thread for cloth from flax or wool, such as this woman in 18th Century attire hangs out to dry at a restored pioneer village. She made soap, molded candles, turned butter and baked bread. The preparation of meals took much of her time, for the hard farm work stimulated enormous appetites.

Both husband and wife also had to be ever watchful protectors of the household.

REINHARDT: That's a history lesson you must have had more than once.

HERROW: Maybe you'd blocked it out of your memory until now.

REINHARDT: Well, here's a history lesson you never had from our slightly mad Professors Warren Leming and Nate Herman.

NARRATORS: Radio Films presents "Your Country," a primer for new citizens, a brief technicolor look at American history.

Boston, Mass., 1775: a group of wealthy merchants, angered by a new tax which has drastically cut their profits, decide to take the law into their own hands by disguising the local poor as an angry mob, who'll take the blame in case anyone is caught. Ooops, here comes John Hancock, founding father and tycoon who's disguised himself as a member of a local ethnic group.

How, Mr. Hancock?

"HANCOCK": By putting these feathers on my head.

NARRATOR: So remember Mr. New Citizen, the rich can't afford to go to

jail; they've got a country to run.

The Revolution has been won, and wealthy slave-owner George Washington would prefer to be appointed King. But wait a minute. That's no good. Then there would have been no point to the Revolution in the first place.

Remember, Mr. New Citizen, our elected officials don't inherit their wealth and power. They have to work for it. Give them your support.

It's 1828, and John Quincy Adams plans to nationalize the waterways and transportation routes into a vast network which will promote free trade and easy access to all Americans.

And this harebrained socialist scheme cost him the presidency.

And he is succeeded by war hero Andrew Jackson, who has just helped annihilate yet another Indian tribe.

So remember, when you cast that first ballot, if it's a choice between some left-thinking symp and a proven winner, make your vote count.

1846, and America goes to war for the third time in seventy years. Having defeated the poorly equipped Mexican Army, the victors settle for a small land deal.

The small land being Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and most of California.

Where to from here, asked the Secretary of the Interior. Alaska is jokingly suggested.

Oh, sure, he replies, and I suppose Hawaii is next.

The cabinet has a good laugh on that and goes to work on a plan to acquire Cuba and the Philippines.

Oh, but there's the classroom bell, and we haven't even fought two world wars yet.

We'll catch up next time. In the meantime, remember, Mr. New Citizen, your government is there for a good. So don't question it.

For National Public Radio, this has been Nate Herman and Warren Leming. Good night.

* * *

ALTERNATIVE TO CITIZEN EDUCATION

REINHARDT: It's hard to believe there's a more radical approach to teaching citizenship but that. But how about not teaching it at all, not in school, not by the American Legion or the Chamber of Commerce; not even by better trained teachers in street law courses?

MERROW: That's the view that historian Henry Steele Commager has come around to, as he told Tom Looker.

COMMAGER: My feeling is that citizenship is something that can't be taught and it's something that has to be learned, as it were, and learned in a hundred different ways, not by formal teaching. One of the extraordinary features of the American character is we seem to have faith in the two most erroneous notions: one, that everything can be taught if you just give a course in it. We now have hundreds of thousands of courses in love and marri-

age and tens of thousands of sex manuals, and the divorce rate goes up steadily every year. And the notion that you can somehow solve a problem by organizing a formal course and teaching it is an illusion that comes from immaturity.

And the second error implicit in this question, and in so many others, is that the notion that the straight line is the shortest distance between two points in mathematics has been transferred to the philosophical and the social arena, where it is simply grossly untrue. And I do not think citizenship, as such, whatever that many mean, can be formally taught. It is something one absorbs over years of teaching. You absorb it from literature; you absorb it from art; you absorb it from music; you absorb it from society; from history perhaps more than elsewhere. It is not something that should be separated from the rest of life. It is the whole of life. And it must be -- it seeps into the young, but only if society itself has standards of what might be called civic virtue.

The great men who made the nation and who wrote the Constitution had no training in citizenship whatever of a formal character. The Jeffersons, the Madisons, the Hamiltons, the Washingtons: they had training in history, training in literature and law, in the arts, in the history of civilization as it were, but no school at any level taught anything remotely like citizenship. These things are part of a seamless web. They start, as it were, in the kindergarten with the standards that society sets up, the standard that says never be abrasive, always be cooperative; always be well-rounded. A well-rounded man is one who's cut all the corners, as we know. These things don't, in fact, get results in any field. They do, of course, in science. You have to learn things in science. Mathmetics can be taught, and it can be taught cumulatively. But the notion that because mathematics can be taught or chemistry can be taught you can teach philosophy, you can teach religion, you can teach civics, you can teach patriotism, you can teach virtue, you can teach happiness, you can teach love: these are fallacies.

REINHARDT: Henry Steele Commager of Amherst College, talking with Tom Looker.

YOUNGSTER: Well, I think a good citizen is a person who voices his opinions and moral judgments and follows the laws which were made because he is a person who votes for a congressman who makes the laws.

YOUNGSTER: I wouldn't say that everybody who would stick to their moral values is a good citizen. But I think that that could be part of it.

YOUNGSTER: You know, even someone like me, just a kid in school, can help influence a congressperson to make a decision about a law or a bill, or somethink like that.

* * *

MERROW: A transcript of "Learning to be an American," which is OPTIONS IN EDUCATION program number 135, will cost you fifty cents. Or you may purchase the cassette for five dollars.

REINHARDT: Here is the address: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036.

MERROW: Here's that information again. "Learning to be an American," fifty cents for the transcript, five dollars for the cassette. The address: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036.

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MERROW: Material for this program came, in part, from Bob Austin, WEPR, Clemson, South Carolina; Jim Falconer, KCFR, Denver, Colorado; Chuck Spratt, KMUW, Wichita, Kansas; Warren Leming and Nate Herman in Chicago;

Tom Looker in Amherst, Massachusetts; and NPR's Scott Simon in Chicago.

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MERROW: Principal support for the series comes from the National Institute of Education. Other funds are provided by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

REINHARDT: The series is written and produced by John Merrow. The Associate producer is Natalie Igiltz. Production assistance by Mark Fermit (?). Technical assistance by Mark Hoffman and Maury Schlesinger. I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow. And I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands.

REINHARDT: And this is NPR, National Public Radio.

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